

VZCZCXRO8745
PP RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #0900/01 1581649
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 071649Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7517
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 0174

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000900

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SE NATSIOS, AF/SPG, NSC FOR PITTMAN AND
SHORTLEY

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [SU](#) [ER](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: UN/AU PROCESS FLAILING

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: The absence of a specific UN/AU plan for the Darfur political process has led to an increase in competing international initiatives. The UN and AU appear unable to exert the necessary leadership to shape these initiatives into a coherent strategy. They have wavered in their support for the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) effort to unite the factions of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) in preparation for a conference in Southern Sudan. While the UN and AU claim that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Task Force on Darfur's proposal for the conference remains disjointed and unrealistic, their engagement with the SPLM's senior leadership has been limited. SPLM leaders are likewise disappointed with the UN/AU's efforts to date. The UN and AU have no plan to address a new "regional initiative" led by Eritrea. France has announced it will hold a ministerial-level meeting in Paris on June 25 for the parties to the Tripoli Consensus plus other African governments.

¶2. (SBU) Summary continued: UN Envoy Jan Eliasson will present the latest version of the UN/AU roadmap to the UN Security Council on June 8. UN sources indicate that the roadmap will lay out broad principles and dates rather than a strategy to realize these benchmarks. While remaining the only impartial parties to lead the political process, the UN and AU must go beyond calls for coordinating international efforts. The USG should urge the UN/AU to select those initiatives with the greatest chance of success and then support the UN/AU as it discourages efforts outside of its strategy. End summary.

UN/AU Brief Darfur Partners

¶3. (SBU) UN and AU representatives briefed Western donors on June 6 in Khartoum. Following the completion of consultations in Darfur and Eritrea, Pekka Haavisto, senior advisor to UN Envoy Jan Eliasson, and Sam Ibok, co-chair of the UN/AU Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST), described the various international initiatives to advance the Darfur political process. They lamented that none of the individual initiatives could involve all of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatory leaders but did not articulate a strategy to confront this dilemma.

SPLM Conference

¶4. (SBU) The senior SPLM leadership has proposed a conference in Southern Sudan to prepare the DPA non-signatories for negotiations. According to the UN and AU, however, the SPLM Darfur Taskforce has articulated a more expansive vision, including the participation of civil society, the reconciliation of Arab and African tribes, and

other elements. It is still unclear how these different visions of the SPLM initiative will be reconciled. The JMST has only met with one senior SPLM official, Minister of Cabinet Affairs Deng Alor. The UN/AU expressed concerns about the meeting proposed by the SPLM Taskforce. JMST members in contact with key Darfur field commanders and political leaders said that the SPLM has not contacted them and has instead invited only civil society activists and traditional leaders to Southern Sudan. Sources in the SPLM Task Force contradict these assertions and claim that they have met military commanders in N'djamena and "established contact" with commanders in Darfur.

15. (SBU) The UN and AU expressed a concern that Western donor backing for the SPLM Taskforce would encourage the Taskforce to circumvent rather than coordinate with the UN and AU. Haavisto said that Alor had admitted that he feared the SPLM was drifting away from the UN/AU lead. Alor had emphasized, however, that the SPLM leadership viewed the party's role as a facilitator rather than a mediator and that it would focus on preparing the non-signatories for negotiations. The Norwegian ambassador suggested that the UN and AU speak directly to First Vice President Salva Kiir. Poloff explained that the USG had conducted extensive discussions with the SPLM leadership. The leadership understood that the Taskforce lacked direction and was taking steps to address this weakness. Echoing the Norwegian ambassador's suggestion, Poloff predicted that the SPLM taskforce would not launch a conference that was inconsistent with the party leadership's goals.

16. (SBU) Some donors also expressed concern that Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) leader Khalil Ibrahim had told the JMST that he would not attend a conference in Southern Sudan. Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) faction leader Abdulwahid al-Nur has similar reservations. Other factions of the SLA, including SLA/Abdulwahid field commanders, insist that a meeting to unite the SLA should precede the SPLM meeting in Southern Sudan. (Note: The SPLM claims to have received assurances from a wide variety of faction leaders, including Abdulwahid, that they will attend the SPLM conference.

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End note.)

NGO Initiatives

17. (SBU) The JMST said there was a lack of coordination among the initiatives proposed by non-governmental organizations. While noting the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue's proposal to facilitate greater cohesion within the SLA in preparation for a conference, the JMST was concerned that its meeting in Nairobi could overlap with the SPLM's conference in Southern Sudan. Haavisto reported that Presidential Advisor Maghazoub Al Khalifa had objected to allowing rebel leaders to attend a meeting outside Sudan. Given National Congress Party (NCP) opposition, the UN and AU said that Chad was reticent to permit the SLA field commanders to transit their country en route to Nairobi while Kenya was concerned that allowing the meeting could jeopardize their proposed summit for IGAD.

18. (SBU) Haavisto said that some rebel leaders were in Asmara for Eritrean-sponsored talks and were unlikely to leave for Nairobi. He also said that faction leader Ahmed Abdulshafi had refused to attend the CHD meeting, preferring instead a proposal from the Community of Sant Egidio to hold talks in Rome. The UN/AU asked that CHD and Sant Egidio coordinate and emphasized that any NGO initiatives should complement SPLM efforts. (Note: Poloff met with Sant' Egidio representatives on June 5. Unlike CHD, which has long-standing relationships with Darfur political leaders and field commanders, they had not made contact with any rebel leaders except Abdulshafi. Reporting from Embassy Kampala indicates that Abdulshafi is willing to attend the CHD meeting. SPLM Taskforce members also say Abdulshafi is willing to attend the SPLM conference. End note.)

19. (SBU) Poloff reported that CHD was coordinating with the SPLM and that its proposal was necessary to make the meeting in Southern Sudan successful given SLA commanders request for unity talks. Dialogue with SPLM Taskforce members in Juba, however, indicates

little effective coordination to date. He questioned the military and political weight of the rebel leaders in Asmara, explaining that the value of including them in SLA organizational talks was to avoid them becoming spoilers. However, they should not be allowed to prevent a constructive meeting. Poloff further noted that the NCP should not be allowed to dictate the UN/AU process. He said that CHD had selected Nairobi because Abdulwahid had said he would not come to Sudan. Poloff suggested that an explicit UN/AU endorsement of CHD was likely to persuade Chad and Kenya to provide assistance.

Eritrea and the "Regional Initiative"

¶10. (SBU) Having returned from two days of meetings in Asmara, Haavisto and Ibok reported that the Eritrean government was holding unity talks for SLA faction leaders Khamis Abdullah, Sharif Harir, and Abdullah Yehia under a "regional initiative" that included Chad and Libya. Eritrean officials Yemane Ghareab and Abdullah Jabr had stated that these talks would last until the end of June and had said that they had a mandate from the NCP for their initiative. They then wanted to send the group to Southern Sudan to attend the SPLM conference with other rebel groups. This conference would lead to formal negotiations between the rebels and the NCP in Asmara. Ghareab and Jabr admitted that Abdulwahid, Abdulshafi, and Ibrahim would not participate in an Eritrean-led process or go to Asmara. (Note: While the UN/AU said it was unable to reign in Eritrea, Asmara may be emboldened by the tacit support of some Western donors, particularly Norway. End note.)

UN/AU Roadmap Flailing

¶11. (SBU) The donors asked for precise timelines delineating a strategy, requested "more guidance from the UN and AU," and suggested that the UN/AU serve as a "clearinghouse" for the international efforts. Ibok responded that "it was difficult to say which initiatives had a comparative advantage." The UN and AU stated that they had originally envisaged a three-stage roadmap for the political process: 1) The CHD meeting in Nairobi to bring greater organization to the SLA; 2) The SPLM meeting in Southern Sudan to prepare the rebel movements for negotiations with the NCP; 3) Negotiations.

¶12. (SBU) Overwhelmed by events, however, the UN/AU has drifted. Interference by Sant' Egidio has obscured the momentum generated by CHD for an SLA meeting. The NCP's opposition to rebel leaders leaving Darfur raises real concerns within the UN/AU. The disconnects within the SPLM--which will be resolved in time--have led the UN/AU to "rethink" the SPLM's role. However, the JMST

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continues to insist that all NGO initiatives, such as CHD, should feed into the SPLM meeting. While emphasizing that Eritrea must play a part in the political process to prevent it from being a spoiler, the UN and AU have not shaped its role, either directly or by calling for assistance from countries that can influence Asmara. The UN/AU's role as chairman of the regular contact group meetings based on the Tripoli format has been undermined by France's announcement that FM Kouchner will convene a ministerial-level meeting of the "Tripoli Plus" in Paris on July 25. (Note: The French Political Counselor told Poloff that this group would include representatives from the April conference in Tripoli and other African countries, including Ghana. End note.) Though UNSYG Ban Ki Moon has been invited, France did not consult the UN in advance.

Comment

¶13. (SBU) The international community, including the Sudanese Government and the regional actors, gave the UN and AU a mandate for the Darfur political process in the Addis Ababa agreement of November and reiterated it in the Tripoli Consensus of April. The UN and AU have yet to act on this mandate to channel the efforts of

Western donors, regional governments, and NGOs. The USG should press the UN/AU to return to its three-stage strategy: A CHD meeting to bring more organization to the SLA, an SPLM meeting to prepare the rebel movements for negotiations with the NCP, and negotiations involving UN/AU--not Eritrean--mediation.

¶14. (SBU) Comment continued: Strong UN/AU endorsement of a strategy would pressure the disparate factions to participate in the process; garner Kenyan and Chadian support for the CHD meeting; facilitate coordination with the SPLM and increase the chances of success of its conference; encourage France to push Abdulwahid to attend both the CHD meeting and the SPLM conference; and weaken support for Eritrea, which is exploiting the UN/AU disarray. A UN/AU strategy will show the Sudanese Government--and its backers such as China--that the international community is serious about both an effective political process and an effective peacekeeping operation for Darfur. This strategy will also hold the Sudanese Government accountable to its commitment to support the UN/AU lead and engage in serious negotiations with the non-signatories. End comment.

¶15. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.